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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: "Dividends in Health and Growth"--Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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How much does a hot lunch count in a child's health and growth?

Ada M. Moser--nutritionist of the South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station---has recently made a study that throws some light on this question.

For a period of 15 months....she observed the growth and nutritional condition of children in two rural elementary schools. These schools are located in the upper Piedmont section of South Carolina...near the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains.

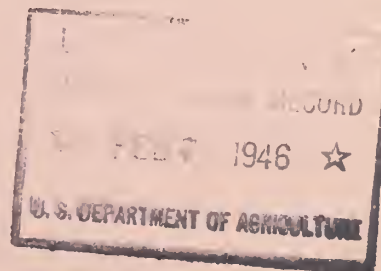
Most of the children come from small farm homes. Cotton is the chief cash crop in that section. In 1940...the average farm income was less than \$500. Health officers and teachers believed that irregular school attendance and failure to make good progress in school was due in part to a lack of proper kinds and amounts of food. That's one reason why Miss Moser selected these schools for the nutrition study.

During the winter sessions...children attending one of the schools ate a complete hot lunch every day. At the other school...the children received a partial lunch...consisting of foods that could be served without cooking.

At the end of the period....an experienced pediatrician found that a greater proportion of the complete lunch group had the outward physical signs of good nutrition.

And there was other evidence that a complete hot lunch every day pays dividends to the growing boy and girl.

(more)



A higher proportion of the complete lunch group made unusually good gains in height. Miss Moser considered this especially significant. Most of the children were short for their age...compared with children in a nearby college community.

A somewhat larger proportion of the children receiving a complete lunch improved the trend of their physical growth and development. A smaller proportion of them lost ground during the period of study.

In spite of increased demand for blood-building materials during growth... the group receiving the complete lunch maintained hemoglobin levels. The other group had hemoglobin values significantly lower at the close of the study.

Summing up...Miss Moser said: "The school lunch....while it alone cannot correct long-standing malnutrition....can play an important role in immediate improvement of the food intake of school children...and in the nutrition education program...which should have far-reaching and lasting results."

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